

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1 1. A method for tracking status of an inventory shipment sent to
2 a recipient, the method comprising:

3 monitoring whether the recipient has transmitted an electronic
4 acknowledgment of the status of the shipment; and

5 automatically transmitting a message to the recipient requesting
6 acknowledgment of receipt of inventory if the electronic acknowledgment is not
7 transmitted by the recipient within a first predetermined amount of time.

1 2. The method of claim 1 wherein the monitoring step comprises
2 monitoring whether the recipient has transmitted, via a terminal, the electronic
3 acknowledgment to a host computer in communication with the terminal.

1 3. The method of claim 2 further comprising inhibiting operation
2 of the terminal if the terminal does not print the message within a second,
3 predetermined amount of time.

1 4. The method of claim 3 further comprising restoring operation
2 of the terminal after the recipient causes the message to be printed by the terminal.

1 5. The method of claim 2 further comprising inhibiting operation
2 of the terminal if the recipient does not respond to the message within a second,
3 predetermined amount of time.

1 6. The method of claim 5 further comprising restoring operation
2 of the terminal after the recipient responds to the message.

1 7. The method of claim 2 further comprising transmitting a notice
2 to the terminal indicating that the shipment has been sent.

1 8. A method for tracking status of an inventory shipment sent to
2 a recipient, the method comprising:

3 monitoring whether the recipient has transmitted, via a terminal, an
4 electronic acknowledgment of the status of the shipment to a host computer in
5 communication with the terminal;

6 automatically transmitting a message from the host computer to the
7 terminal requesting acknowledgment of receipt of inventory if the recipient does not
8 transmit the electronic acknowledgment within a first predetermined amount of time;

9 inhibiting operation of the terminal through the host computer if the
10 terminal does not print the message within a second, predetermined amount of time;

11 automatically restoring operation of the terminal after the terminal
12 prints the message if operation of the terminal has previously been inhibited for
13 failure to print the message; and

14 automatically disabling the terminal through the host computer if the
15 recipient does not respond to the message within a third, predetermined amount of
16 time.

1 9. A method for tracking an inventory shipment sent to a
2 recipient, the method comprising:

3 providing the recipient with a means to electronically communicate a
4 status of the inventory shipment to a sender of the inventory shipment.

1 10. The method of claim 9 further comprising monitoring whether
2 the recipient has communicated the status of the inventory shipment.

1 11. The method of claim 10 wherein the monitoring step comprises
2 determining whether the recipient has communicated the status of the inventory
3 shipment within a predetermined amount of time.

1 12. The method of claim 9 further comprising transmitting a notice
2 to the recipient indicating that the shipment has been sent.

1 13. The method of claim 9 wherein the providing step comprises
2 providing the recipient with a terminal for electronically communicating the status
3 of the inventory shipment, and wherein the method further comprises inhibiting

4 operation of the terminal if the recipient does not communicate the status of the
5 inventory shipment within a predetermined amount of time.

1 14. The method of claim 13 further comprising restoring operation
2 of the terminal after the status of the inventory shipment has been communicated to
3 the sender.

1 15. A system for tracking status of an inventory shipment sent to
2 a recipient, the system comprising:

3 a host computer for receiving an electronic acknowledgment of receipt
4 of inventory from the recipient, the host computer being operable to automatically
5 transmit a message to the recipient requesting acknowledgment of receipt of
6 inventory if the electronic acknowledgment is not received within a first
7 predetermined amount of time.

1 16. The system of claim 15 further comprising a terminal in
2 communication with the host computer, the terminal being operable to transmit the
3 electronic acknowledgment to the host computer and to receive the message from the
4 host computer.

1 17. The system of claim 16 wherein the terminal is further
2 operative to automatically inhibit operation of the terminal if the terminal is not
3 instructed to print the message within a second, predetermined amount of time.

1 18. The system of claim 17 wherein the terminal is further
2 operative to automatically restore operation of the terminal after the terminal is
3 instructed to print the message.

1 19. The system of claim 16 wherein the host computer is further
2 operable to inhibit operation of the terminal if the recipient does not print the
3 message within a second, predetermined amount of time.

1 20. The system of claim 19 wherein the host computer is further
2 operable to restore operation of the terminal after the terminal prints the message.

1 21. The system of claim 16 wherein the host computer is further
2 operable to inhibit operation of the terminal if the recipient does not respond to the
3 message within a second, predetermined amount of time.

1 22. The system of claim 21 wherein the host computer is further
2 operable to restore operation of the terminal after the recipient responds to the
3 message.

1 23. The system of claim 16 wherein the host computer is further
2 operable to transmit a notice to the terminal indicating that the shipment has been
3 sent.

1 24. A system for tracking status of an inventory shipment sent to
2 a recipient, the system comprising:

3 a terminal for transmitting an electronic acknowledgment of receipt
4 of inventory; and

5 a host computer in communication with the terminal for receiving the
6 electronic acknowledgment, the host computer being operable to transmit a message
7 to the terminal requesting acknowledgment of receipt of inventory if the electronic
8 acknowledgment is not received within a first, predetermined amount of time, the
9 host computer further being operable to inhibit operation of the terminal if the
10 terminal does not transmit the electronic acknowledgment within a second,
11 predetermined amount of time.